

## Family Business Builds a Future on Okra



Photo: USAID/Jan Howard

Sebastian Araya Sr. and his family at the family farm in San Benito.

“USAID helped me establish a direct market link with a Miami-based vegetable wholesaler to export my okra crop. With a free trade agreement, I'll have more options for buying production materials that could lower my costs and I'll have a guarantee of a U.S. market for my okra. I'm not worried about competition. I've received help from USAID to improve my production. I know I have a high quality product.”

- Sebastian Araya Sr.

The Araya family members have been farming all their lives. In the past, they planted corn and sorghum on their 50-hectare farm in San Benito, Nicaragua. But these low-value crops produced little return for this hard working family. When a local produce buyer suggested that the family try growing okra for export, the Arayas were willing to give it a try. Soon their fields were covered with okra plants and the family found that this nontraditional crop could increase their income.

Finally, the family's big break came when Sebastian Araya Jr. was invited by USAID to participate in a trade fair in New Orleans, Louisiana. At the fair, Araya Jr. established a direct market link with a Miami-based vegetable wholesaler. USAID provided the family with market assistance and financing for the construction of a small packing facility.

The Araya family has increased their exports by 300% over last year, exporting 35,000 crates of okra with a value of \$500,000 to the U.S. and Canada. In the future, the Arayas are convinced that a free trade agreement for the region will benefit them even more. USAID's \$90 million Trade Capacity Building program for Nicaragua is helping thousands of producers like Araya to diversify crops, improve quality, and gain entry into new markets.

First Person